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ABSTRACT

The book "Of Play and Playfulness" (Eastern Cooperative Recreation School, 1990) is recommended as a source of ideas for second language learning games. It describes folk dances, ideas for crafts, puppetry, games, and a variety of other activities from many countries. Several games from the book, easy to teach in a foreign language or English-as-a-Second-Language class, are explained here. The first is a listening activity, originating in the United States, designed to practice one grammatical structure or a mixture of structures. In the second, an active Brazilian children's game, students hit a balloon to each other while counting or reciting the alphabet. In the third, an Argentinean mime game similar to the American "paper, stone, scissors," two teams mime a man, a tiger, or a gun. The fourth is an alphabet race in which teams compete to find the letters to spell a word. The last game is a quiet mime game in which students, sitting in a circle, take turns manipulating or "shaping" an imaginary object while others try to identify the object. (MSE)

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International Cooperative Games

by Christine Hoppe

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The book Of Play and Playfulness, published in 1990 by the Eastern Cooperative Recreation School, is an excellent resource book for foreign language teachers. It is filled with folk dances, ideas for crafts, puppetry, games, and a variety of activities from many countries. Ed Moyer who worked on the staff of ECRS from 1961 to 1985 as a "recreation leader" gave numerous workshops. In his last workshop in 1986 he stated the seven purposes of games and recreation: 1) to control the aggressive drive; 2) to bring focus outside of the self; 3) to create group cohesiveness; 4) to increase spontaneity; 5) to create a success situation; 6) to reduce competitiveness and to decrease concerns of winning or losing; 7) to teach cooperation (Of Play and Playfulness, p.34).

In 1931 the National Cooperative Recreation School, a forerunner of the ECRS, was founded and it was here that Ed Moyer learned many games. Every year ECRS members have games conventions in March and August usually on the east coast. The adults simply get together to play games and to attend a variety of workshops. "The ECRS is based on the principle that play is an important part of the human experience. Play benefits us in many ways. It builds community, stretches personal abilities, and helps us explore new ways of functioning as people and as groups." (Of Play and Playfulness, p. 239).

Some of the games that are easy to teach in the foreign language or ESL class (and which will be described in this paper) are: Big Wind Blows (USA), Petéca (Brazil), "El Hombre, el Tigre y el Fusil" (Argentina), Alphabet Race (USA), and Passing the Imaginary Object (USA).

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Big Wind Blows is a good listening activity to practise one particular structure or a mixture of structures. In the quieter version of Big Wind Blows, everyone sits in a circle. The teacher can start by calling out different sentences in the target language. For example: "Big Wind Blows for everyone who is wearing blue." (At the elementary level one might simply say the color). Everyone wearing blue moves to a new chair. Later students can call out sentences on their own such as "everyone... who ate breakfast; who likes rock; who has been to Florida; who has a brother; who was born in New York, etc."

Another somewhat noisier version is to have a person standing in the

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center who calls out a sentence and then tries to get a chair in the circle while the others are changing places. The person who cannot find a chair then stands in the center to call out the next sentence.

Petéca is a simple game played with a balloon. Brazilian children play this game on the beaches of Rio de Janeiro. The real "petéca" is a leather sand-filled cone with feathers tied at the end of it. This game is ideal for practising counting or the alphabet. In small groups of five or six, each student counts out loud whenever he hits the balloon with his hand, but no student may strike it twice in a row. The players try to see how long they can count out loud. Two or three groups can play at the same time and compete.

There are several versions of the Argentinian mime game "EL Hombre, el Tigre y el Fusil" (the Man, the Tiger and the Gun). It is very similar to the "Paper Stone Scissors" game which is often used for decision-making except that two teams play rather than individuals. The Japanese equivalent is "Obaasan, Samurai, and Shishi" (Old Woman, Warrior and Lion). The American version is "Giants, Wizards, Elves."

In the Argentinian game (which is a more violent version) two teams of ten to fifteen players line up facing each other. They then huddle together to decide what they will mime as a group: the man (each person will have his arms crossed over the chest) or the gun (each person extends his arm like a rifle) or the tiger (each person raises arms or claws over the head and shows his teeth). At a given signal, the teams assume their mime or pose. To score points: the gun wins over the tiger since it can shoot the tiger, the tiger can kill the man; and the man can control the gun.

Another game that many language teachers play is the Alphabet Race. Once again there are two teams lined up. On two tables (placed about twenty feet away from each team) are cards with the letters of the alphabet. A leader calls out a word such as "ciao." Each player goes to the table to find the letter that corresponds to the order in which he was standing in line. The second person in line would find the "i" for example. Then the players line up quickly in front of the table holding up their letters in the correct order and saying the word out loud in chorus! The words should not have letters that repeat and the leader might occasionally mix up the letters on the tables.

The last game (which is good for the intermediate or advanced level) might also be called "Passing the Blob." It is a quiet mime game. When the game is over, participants can comment on some of the imaginary objects or ask questions about the ones they could not understand.

Everyone sits in a circle. The leader starts by holding an imaginary

blob of clay in her hands. She shapes it into an object (for example, a violin or a hat) and then passes the blob to the next person. Each person shapes it into a different object and participants become quite intrigued as they try to figure out what each person decides to create!

The book Of Play and Playfulness has many other games which would interest foreign language or ESL teachers as well as teachers who are interested in cooperative learning activities. For more information write to the Eastern Cooperative Recreation School, c/o Margaret Moyer, RD 1, Box 287, Millmont, PA 17845.